

## House Bill 6517 Testimony:

My name is Siobhan Brearley, from East Lyme CT, and I support House Bill 6517. I am writing to you today not only from the perspective of an educator but as a mother of two children that have dyslexia. I am a “fully” trained educator. I attended my education courses on a regular basis, participated and paid attention, and got good grades. I was very attentive for the ONE special education class that I was required to take. Wow, was that a lot to cover in one class! Fast forward to a few years later, where I had a student in my class that I could not reach. She failed all her quizzes and tests, she sat in my class with a frightened look on her face and when I tried to help, she would burst into tears or act out. I knew my student needed help and I desperately tried but I had no idea what I was looking at. I did not know that she needed structured literacy in order to learn. I didn’t even know what structured literacy was back then! The guilt that I have carried with me will be forever engrained in my brain and in my heart. I often wonder about my student. Did anyone ever help her? Did anyone ever recognize that she likely had dyslexia? Did she get structured literacy? Or did she grow up continuing to struggle? Does she have children now and they are struggling? I will never know what happened to my student but I hope that she eventually found a teacher that had more knowledge than I did.

I am now the proud mother of two children that have dyslexia and they know about this Bill. They have asked for their stories to be heard. Our personal family story began in a different district than where we currently reside and our experience in East Lyme has been different. In our old district, we had to pay for outside evaluations to be done, we had to miss school time to do so, we had to spend countless hours on the internet and speaking to dyslexia experts in order to understand what was going on, we missed time from work as we called numerous PPT’s trying to advocate for our children. We were denied intervention and evaluations so we had to do it on our own. I am grateful to those outside evaluators and people that helped along the way but precious time was wasted when my children needed help from their school.

My children would like you to know that they are now getting intervention but they wish that they had it sooner. They wish they had never had a hit to their self-esteem and they wish that they could just be kids without the pressure of after school tutoring services. My children don’t blame their teachers; we often talk about my experience of missing it in my students because I did not have adequate training, but they desperately hope that other children will not have the same experience as they did. They are asking that you please support House Bill 6517 so that you can help all teachers get the training that they need and deserve and that more requirements and training revolve around early screening measures. Proper intervention needs to begin in the early grades before a child takes a hit to their self-esteem.

Thank you for your support to House Bill 6517.

Sincerely,

Siobhan Brearley and Family